



May 2004

Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card

The Medicare Modernization Act passed by Congress in 2003, adds new prescription drug benefits to Medicare in 2006. In the meantime, the *Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card and Transitional Assistance Program* gives temporary help until the Medicare drug benefit starts in January 2006. **You shouldn't drop your current prescription drug coverage for a discount card.**

What is a Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card?

Medicare is contracting with private companies to offer discount cards to help people with Medicare save money on their prescriptions. These discount cards will have a "Medicare-approved" seal. Enrolling with a card is voluntary.



Who is eligible to purchase a Drug Discount Card?

You are eligible to purchase a Medicare-approved drug discount card if:

- ◆ you are entitled to or enrolled in Medicare Part A **and/or** Part B
- ◆ you do **not** have prescription drug coverage through MaineCare.

When can I enroll?

You can enroll anytime beginning May 2004 through December 31, 2005.

****You can join only one discount drug card each year.****

If you choose a card in 2004, you can't switch to another card for the rest of the calendar year. You will be able to choose a different card for 2005 during the annual election period between November 15 and December 31, 2004.

There are four situations that would allow you to change earlier:

- ◆ you permanently move to a state that doesn't offer your discount card,
- ◆ you join or leave a Medicare Advantage plan,
- ◆ you enter or leave a long-term care facility or
- ◆ the private company stops offering your discount card.

What will the discount card cost?

Private companies that offer these cards are allowed to charge you a yearly fee of no more than \$30. No matter when you join a discount card you still have to pay the entire yearly fee.

How much will I save?

The companies will decide which prescriptions will be discounted, and the amount of the price discount for each drug. Only drugs included on the company's discount drug list will be discounted. The estimated savings with these cards are 10-15% on your total prescription costs and as much as 25% on certain drugs.

This means you need to compare each card carefully to choose the one that offers your prescriptions at the best-discounted price. **Keep in mind that a company can change its drug list and the discounted price anytime.**

The discount card cannot be used for drugs covered by Medicare.

Where will I get my prescriptions?

The company will provide you with a pharmacy directory. You must go to a pharmacy listed in their directory to receive your prescription discounts.

How do I choose a drug discount card?

You should compare the costs of your prescriptions with all the discount cards available to make sure you are making the best choice. If you live part-time in another state or travel, you may want to choose a card that covers you nationally.

SHIP can help you compare the drug discount card programs. Call **1-877-353-3771** for more information about the drug cards available in Maine. A list of approved cards is also available on www.medicare.gov. (Select "Prescription Drug and Other Assistance Programs") Enrollment forms are available from the drug card sponsors, SHIP or www.medicare.gov.